

Downtown Ipswich – For Discussion Purposes

Prepared for the Town of Ipswich

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Business Mix: Strategies & Activities to Consider

1.1 Encourage additional business development in downtown

- 1.1.1 Promotional materials – recruit businesses, market downtown as good place for business
- 1.1.2 Explore potential for business incubator, co-working space or makerspace
- 1.1.3 Building owners/realtors send e-mail blast when space is available

1.2 Promote greater density of retail (and restaurants)

- 1.2.1 Zoning that prioritizes 1st floor space for retail/restaurants
- 1.2.3 Explore “Made in Ipswich Concept” venture

1.3 Promote development of entertainment venues & encourage businesses to offer entertainment

- 1.3.1 Continue to provide venues for live music and dancing (Meeting House Green, Downtown Tuesdays)
- 1.3.2 Continue to pursue opportunity for Town Hall adaptive reuse

1.4 Encourage higher density & concentration of businesses

- 1.4.1 Review current zoning to determine if flexibility for density

Market Relationship: Strategies & Activities to Consider

2.1 Create stronger promotional links between tourism efforts, attractions and downtown

- 2.1.1 Develop joint tourism/downtown business entity (task force, advisory committee)
- 2.1.2 Use Visitor Center to market downtown (marketing materials, product showcase)
- 2.1.3 Merchants work cooperatively with each other and the Town to attract visitors
- 2.1.4 Consider routing foot traffic from Explorer to commuter train through downtown
- 2.1.5 Work with historic tour providers to include drive-thru of the downtown
- 2.1.6 Create a Cultural District, explore potential for MA Designation

2.2 Make Downtown Ipswich & info about businesses easier to find in cyberspace

- 2.2.1 Sponsor workshops on how businesses can use social media
- 2.2.2 Hire intern to review web presence, make suggestions for updates
- 2.2.3 Feature Downtown Ipswich in “Attraction” Section of Visitor Center Website
- 2.2.4 Add quick link on the Town website to the Ipswich Visitor Center website

2.3 Effectively communicate info about downtown & available shopping, dining, service options

- 2.3.1 Create kiosks in strategic locations that include a map of the district
- 2.3.2 Develop walking tour, map of downtown, include business listings

2.4 Create stronger links between events and downtown businesses

- 2.4.1 Policy that encourages events to promote local businesses and local purchasing - policy statement or MOU included with permit (e.g., satellite activities to draw customers thru downtown when events held at Riverwalk/EBSCO; distribute downtown promotional materials at events, showcase downtown)
- 2.4.2 Re-establish, relocate and expand the farmers market at the Memorial Green on South Main Street.

2.5 Encourage additional mixed-use development (including housing) in and near downtown.



District Experience: Strategies & Activities to Consider

- 3.1 Make the downtown appear more “open for business” and welcoming to customers**
 - 3.1.1 Maintain window transparency instead of covering with blinds, equipment, storage or signs
 - 3.1.2 Encourage “light after dark” to promote “life after dark” (ornamental tree lighting, keep storefront lights on)
- 3.2 Encourage higher concentration & strategic location of businesses** (suggestions under Category 1)
- 3.3 Create public spaces that encourage interaction, social gathering, performers & activities**
 - 3.3.1 Allow business owners to place tables and chairs on sidewalks whether or not they serve food
 - 3.3.2 Implement public streetscape improvements, sitting areas and small pocket park spaces
- 3.4 Facilitate the creation of outdoor dining, patios, and sidewalk sitting areas**
 - 3.4.1 Look for opportunities where sidewalk dining might be feasible
 - 3.4.2 Consider implementing a “Parklet” model to create room for outdoor dining
- 3.5 Draw customers into downtown, help them find parking and businesses**
 - 3.5.1 Improve Hammatt Street Parking Lot. Redesign entrances, layout and add aesthetic landscaping.
 - 3.5.2 Way-finding signage system - gateway welcome, business directory kiosks, and directional signage
 - 3.5.3 Encourage business owners to open up and improve back entrances accessible to parking
- 3.6 Bring more public transit riders (commuter train and Explorer bus) into the downtown**
 - 3.6.1 Consider opportunities to route pedestrians & tourists through the downtown (e.g., Explorer, tours)
 - 3.6.2 Create strong pedestrian linkage between public transit & downtown; implement unifying design elements
- 3.7 Create a sense of “arrival”. Encourage through traffic to stop in the downtown.**
 - 3.7.1 Consider regulations/design elements that would slow traffic down as enter the downtown area
 - 3.7.2 Design and install welcome signage and other gateway treatment
- 3.8 Make the river a bigger part of downtown**
 - 3.8.1 Extend the Riverwalk; open up and intermingle river access with downtown commercial enterprises
 - 3.8.2 Explore ways to make stronger connection between Riverwalk and downtown commercial enterprises



Inside the Business: Strategies & Activities to Consider

- 4.1 Sponsor educational/technical assistance workshops for business owners**
 - 4.1.1 Sponsor a workshops on social media (also cited 2.2.1)
 - 4.1.2 Create Best Retail Practices Program. Sponsor workshops focusing on storefront, window display, interior layout and how to select an appropriate product/service mix to fit the market. Select a small number of workshop participants to receive one-on-one technical assistance from consultant, perhaps with small matching grant for improvements
 - 4.1.3 Sponsor a workshop on customer services for business employees and owners
- 4.2 Identify appropriate local resources that could be helpful to downtown businesses**
 - 4.2.1 Salem Enterprise Center
 - 4.2.2 Host a “resource fair” for downtown businesses
- 4.3 Assist businesses to better meet the needs of customers & capitalize on market opportunities**
 - 4.3.1 Assist businesses to effectively market to EBSCO employees (e.g. create “EBSCO shopping days”)
 - 4.3.2 Business owners should post hours on storefront as well as online
 - 4.3.3 Encourage businesses to try extending hours on limited basis (e.g., open later on Thursdays).



District Management: Strategies & Activities to Consider . . .

5.1 Explore options for effectively advocating for downtown & enhancing business cooperation

5.1.1 Facilitate a session with business owners to determine problems/issues/opportunities they see in downtown and, if appropriate, form a task force and/or committee(s) to work on most pressing concerns. Test the waters to see if there is sufficient interest and leadership to form a permanent downtown business organization, and if so, explore whether that objective might be best met through the organizational structure and tax status of the existing Ipswich Partnership.

5.1.2 Examine the activities/role of the Chamber of Commerce with regard to downtown; explore potential to expand role if appropriate.

5.1.3 Explore feasibility of creating a Business Improvement District (BID).